

JESUS AT
THE WELLS
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JESUS AT THE WELL

John iv. 1-42

BY

WILLIAM M. TAYLOR, D.D.

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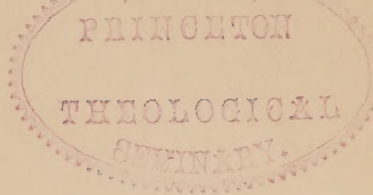
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“Quaerens me, sedisti lassus,
Redemisti, crucem passus:
Tantus labor non sit cassus.”

JESUS AT THE WELL.



I.

Living Water.

JOHN iv. 1-14.

When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

And he must needs go through Samaria.

Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

There cometh a woman of Samaria, to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

I.

LIVING WATER.

JOHN iv. 1-14.

THIS fourth chapter of the gospel by John, interesting as it ever must be in itself, as containing the account of our Lord's interview with the woman at the well, is also exceedingly suggestive, when looked at in its relation to that by which it is immediately preceded. In that we are told of a sinner seeking Christ, and of the manner in which he was received; in this we have a description of Christ seeking a sinner, and of the means which he employed to lead her

to himself. In that we read how the gospel was preached to a Pharisee of exalted station and stainless reputation, and how he stumbled over the assertion of the necessity of the New-birth; in this we learn how the truth was set before the mind of a poor depraved woman, and how after her first prejudices were overcome she joyfully received "the gift of God." And when we put them both together we are profoundly impressed with the perfect adaptation of God's method of salvation to all classes of men, while at the same time we are led to admire the unerring wisdom with which our Divine Redeemer dealt with individuals in every case, according to the character and circumstances of each. The discourse which he addressed to Nicodemus would have been, to a

great extent at least, thrown away on the woman of Samaria; and, on the other hand, the conversation at the well would in its early stages at least have seemed trivial and undignified to the Pharisaic teacher; yet, as tested by the result, they were in each case just what was most appropriate and efficacious. He thus suited the presentation of the gospel to the idiosyncracies of those with whom he came into contact; and all alike found in him that which fitted into their individual requirements.

And that which was so marked a feature of his personal ministry is retained still by these inspired records of his words. Men of all classes and cultures and tastes and pursuits are attracted by them to Christ, yet each discovers in him that which is peculiarly adapted

to himself, and each can say, with as much truth as the woman of Samaria—"he told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ"?

Nor is this all; for it is still true that among the followers of the Lord, there are the two classes represented by Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Some like the former find him after anxious search and nights of enquiry; and others like the latter are found by him when they were not seeking him, but when they were going about their ordinary business, and were not apparently concerning themselves about spiritual affairs. Thus both the ancient oracles are fulfilled. To the one the promise is verified—"they that seek me early," or earnestly, "shall find me;" and in the other the saying is illustrated, "I am found of them that

sought me not; I said, Behold me, Behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name."

It is always a joy to the faithful minister to deal with those who are "seeking for Jesus;" but my present intention is, from the study of this delightful chapter, to bring out some important truths which may perhaps be blessed in leading to the Lord, some who hitherto have had no serious concern for the salvation of their souls.

After the first passover of his public ministry, the Lord seems to have spent some eight months in Jerusalem or its neighborhood. But now he has determined to go northward to Galilee. His motive for changing the scene of his labors is not directly stated; but from the opening verse of the chapter it would appear to have been connected

with his perception of the growing antagonism of the Pharisees. They had, latterly at least, been troubled considerably by the success of John the Baptist; and though now he had, most probably, been cast into prison, their minds were stirred by the recollection of the fact that he had borne special testimony to Jesus as the Messiah, and by their receiving information that the prophet of Nazareth had succeeded in gathering round him more disciples than the Baptist. So they transferred their animosity with added intensity from John to Jesus.

Baptism was a rite of initiation with them both, and so naturally enough the Pharisees regarded them as intimately connected with each other. It is true, indeed, that in the matter of the ordinance which I have just named there

was a marked difference between them, for while John baptized as well as his disciples, "Jesus himself baptized not," but left the administration of the rite entirely to his followers. The reason for this procedure in the Lord's case is nowhere distinctly stated; but it may have been because, like Paul at a later date, he viewed baptism as of smaller importance than the preaching of the gospel; or because those baptized by him might afterwards arrogate to themselves superiority to others on that account, or because, as it was his special prerogative to baptize with the Holy Spirit, he left it to others to deal with the symbol, and restricted himself to that which it symbolized. But in any case, his followers were baptized by his disciples, and their increasing numbers so aggravated the opposition of the

Pharisees that he judged it wise to repair to Galilee.

Now to one going thither from Judea there was a choice between three possible routes. One crossed the Jordan not far from Jericho, and went northward on its Eastern side through Perea, recrossing the river a little to the south of the sea of Galilee. Another lay along the coast of the Mediterranean, and thence passed through the valley of Esdraelon. The third and most direct was by way of Shechem, through the country of the Samaritans. The last would have been, on all ordinary occasions, rejected by the rigid Pharisees, because it would have brought them into contact with a people whom they hated. But Jesus deliberately preferred it, perhaps because in this incidental way he wished to give to his

apostles an earnest of the success which his gospel was yet to have among an alien race. He had told them, when he sent them forth, not to enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans; and as the rule of his own ministry, he kept himself among the Jews—but just as in the cases of the Syrophenician woman, and the Roman centurion, he let a few crumbs fall from the table that was spread, in the first instance, for the Jews; so here we have an incidental exception to the rule of his public life—an instance in which he let the branches of his ministry “run over the wall” of national exclusiveness, that others might pluck the fruit and be nourished and refreshed thereby. It was both a warning to the Jews, of their coming rejection at the hands of God, and a prophecy to the

apostles of the success which they were yet to reap among the Gentiles.

The phrase "he must needs go through Samaria," is one of those suggestive sayings in which John delights, and is not to be narrowed down to the mere truism, that as Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee, he could not go from the one to the other without passing through the intermediate territory. Rather it seems to me to imply that the Lord was, as one might say, "led of the Spirit" through that land. There was an inner impulse moving him thither. He went knowingly and deliberately by this route in order to find this woman and her townsmen. He who knew to look up for Zacchæus on his leafy perch upon the sycamore tree, must have known what was before him on this journey. The neces-

sity which drew him down from heaven to earth, was the "needs be" for his preferring this route to Galilee at this time. He went thither, as he came into the world, "to seek and to save that which was lost."

On his way he came to the immediate neighborhood of a city called Sychar. It was near the hour of noon, and sending his disciples into the city to buy food, he remained to rest alone on the ledge of a well which had been originally dug by the patriarch Jacob. The place in which he thus paused a while was one of great beauty, and of much historic interest. It was none other than that valley of Shechem, whose loveliness still charms the traveller, and of which we have such frequent mention in the Old Testament Scriptures. Running from East to West,

it had Mount Ebal on its northern side and Mount Gerizim on its southern. "A valley green with grass, gray with olives, gardens sloping down on each side, fresh springs rushing down in all directions; at the end a white town embosomed in all this verdure, lodged between the two high mountains which extend on each side the valley, this," says Dean Stanley, "is the aspect of Nablous, the most beautiful, perhaps it might be said, the only very beautiful spot in central Palestine."*

Here first after he had crossed the Jordan Abraham built an altar to the Lord; here Jacob dwelt with his family after his return from Padanaram, and so enamored was he of the place that he bought the parcel of the field of the children of Hamor, Shechem's fa-

* "Sinai and Palestine," p. 230.

ther, for three hundred pieces of silver, and dug a well in it to keep for himself an independent supply of water, and to establish an indefeasible title to the property; nay more, so highly did he value it that he left it as a special patrimony to his beloved Joseph. Here, at a later day, the tribes were encamped when six of them were arranged on Mount Gerizim to bless, and six of them on Mount Ebal to curse, and on these hillsides arose from myriad voices the deep and solemn AMEN, by which these sanctions of the law were accepted by the people. On yonder rock Jotham may have stood when in the audience of the men in the valley, he gave forth his famous parable of the trees choosing a king. But these associations, thrilling as they are, dwindle into insignificance before the fact that

here at noontide the Saviour rested, as is here recorded, and forgot his fatigue, in the rewarding work of leading an erring woman into the paths of holiness and peace.

The well itself still remains;—in a ruined condition, indeed, but yet in a sufficient state of preservation to be easily identified. “It is,” says Dr. Schaff, “in an almost square enclosure which measures 192 feet by 151 feet; the wall of this enclosure is almost entirely destroyed, and the ground is covered with shapeless ruins forming a large mound. The well is now 75 feet deep and 7 feet 6 inches in diameter, and is lined throughout with rough masonry. It must have been very much deeper in ancient times, for in the course of 10 years it decreased 10 feet in depth, and Robinson, in 1838, found

it 105 feet deep. Captain Anderson estimates that it has been filled up to probably more than half of its original depth by the stones thrown into it by visitors for the sake of hearing them strike, and by the debris from the ruined church built over the well in the fourth century. The bottom of the well is at times entirely dry, but in some seasons it contains water.”*

It is more than a mile from the modern city of Nablous, and if that be built on the site of the ancient Sychar it seems a little strange that a woman should have come so far for water, especially as the valley is so abundantly provided otherwise. But it is probable that, according to the suggestion of Dr. Thomson,† we must look for the

* “Bible Dictionary,” p. 414.

† “The Land and the Book,” English Edition, p. 472.

position of the ancient Sychar not in Nablous, but among the ruins of a village now called Askâr, close by the well, and a little to the north of it. If that view be adopted, then there was nothing extraordinary in the visit of the woman to the well. But nobody would go now for water to it. "Jacob's well is no more used, but the living spring of water which the Saviour first opened there to a poor, sinful, yet penitent woman is as deep and fresh as ever, and will quench the thirst of souls to the end of time." *

While Jesus sat thus, alone and weary, by the well, a woman came to draw water. It was an unusual time for one to go on such an errand; but perhaps she wanted the water for an unusual emergency, and at any rate, the uncom-

* P. Schaff, D.D., in "Lange's Commentary," *in loco*.

monness of a visit to the well at such an hour sufficiently accounts for the fact that the conversation was uninterrupted by the arrival of any third party, until the disciples themselves returned. In the simplest and most natural manner, the Lord said unto her, as she filled her pitcher, and drew it up out of the depth, "Give me to drink."

To that request she answered in a strain half serious, and half bantering, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" She recognized him as a Jew, either from his appearance, or his accent, and the idea of a Jew humbling himself to ask a favor from a Samaritan seemed to her so rich that she could not help remarking on it in a slightly mischievous strain, as if she had said—"So then, even a Jew when

he is in need can stoop to beg from a Samaritan!"

The evangelist explains the reference of her words by the insertion of the parenthetical clause, "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." The origin of this feud lay far back in the history of the two peoples. When about the year B.C. 721, the ten tribes of Israel were carried away into captivity, the Assyrian conquerors sent into the depopulated country colonists drawn from several idolatrous nations. After a time, owing to the thinly settled condition of the land, these new comers were plagued with lions, and they looked upon the affliction as an indication of the displeasure of the God of the country, because thus far they had offered him no worship. Under the influence of that impression,

they sent to the Assyrian Emperor a request that some Israelitish priests might be permitted to come to them "to teach them the manner of the God of the land." This desire was granted to them, and under the tuition of a priest who came and dwelt in Bethel, they adopted a kind of mongrel religion, half heathen, and half Israelitish—for, as the annalist has recorded, "they feared the Lord and served other gods."

More than two hundred years afterwards, when Zerubbabel came with his associates from Babylon to Jerusalem, the descendants of these Samaritan settlers desired to unite with the Jews in the rebuilding of their temple and city; but when their request to that effect was unqualifiedly refused, they forthwith sought to hinder the work of the returned exiles by every means in their power. They

made false representations concerning them at the Persian court, and tried by fraud and force, by open violence and by secret treachery, to frustrate all their efforts for the restoration of their national worship. Thus the two peoples became thoroughly alienated from each other; and this state of feeling was still further aggravated when the Samaritans erected their temple on Mount Gerizim, and claimed for it priority over that of Jerusalem.

Then again, their construction of the law of Moses, which they professed to keep, but which they interpreted after their own fashion, widened the breach yet more; so that the very name of Samaritan was among the Jews one of opprobrium; as we see in the fact that when they wished to blaspheme the Lord himself in the foulest manner

they said to him, "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil."

When we know all these things, we cannot wonder at the woman's saucily rallying a Jew when she saw him reduced to the necessity of asking even a draught of water from a Samaritan. But the Lord, taking no notice either of the spirit or the meaning of her words, very gently, yet solemnly replied, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." For "the gift of God," here, different meanings have been assigned by the commentators. Some take it as referring to the Holy Spirit, which elsewhere in this gospel is likened to living water; others would interpret it as equivalent to eternal life; while still others would paraphrase it thus, "If

thou knewest the singular grace of God in the golden opportunity of this moment." But in my view it is both simpler and better to understand it of Christ himself. He is the true gift of God, according to his own word, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," and, thus explained, the phrase includes each of the other interpretations that have been given to it.

Substantially then the Lord said to her, "If thou knewest me aright, and recognizedst in me the great gift of God to the world, thou wouldst have asked of me, and I would have given thee living water." Living water is water flowing from a perennial fountain as distinguished from water in a cistern or tank, and throughout the Scriptures it is used as a figurative designation of the blessing of salvation. The sinner

is thirsty; longing for happiness; and Jesus Christ is the living water, which quenches that thirst, and confers abiding and ever-flowing felicity.

But the deeper meaning of the Saviour's words was as yet unknown to this poor woman. She supposed that he was speaking only of common water; and so expressed surprise that he who had neither pitcher nor rope should be able to furnish water from a well so deep. Then beginning to catch a glimpse of the fact that he was laying claim to a most exalted dignity she added, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" It was the boast, whether truthful or not is another question, of these Samaritans, that they were the descendants of Abraham; and the woman could have

given no loftier idea of her conception of the dignity to which she conceived that the stranger was aspiring, than by saying, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?"

But she was not quite ready yet to receive Christ's full revelation of himself, and therefore though as on another occasion he might have said, "Before Jacob was born, I am," he gave for the present no categorical answer to her question. But the answer which he did give implies an affirmative—for he exalts the water which he alone could bestow infinitely above that of the well by the side of which he was speaking. That well was deep indeed, but the well of divine love whence salvation flows is infinitely deeper. The digging and opening of that well was a work of great labor to Jacob and his servants;

but the opening of the fountain for sin and for uncleanness, whereof Jesus here spoke, required more than labor—even sacrifice unto the death. The water of that well could quench thirst only for a season, and it would ultimately dry up; but the living water which Christ supplies quenches thirst for evermore—because it becomes itself a fountain within the soul of every one that drinks it. “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” That is, in brief, whosoever goes elsewhere seeking happiness, will come away at length unsatisfied, and still athirst; but he that comes to me in simple faith,

and follows me in implicit obedience, shall have satisfaction of soul. He has found that which meets his need, and he will not henceforth seek it elsewhere, but content himself with its perpetual enjoyment.

Nor will it pall upon him or nauseate him with satiety, for it will be a fountain in himself, ever clear, and fresh, and flowing, and new.

It would be interesting to follow their conversation till its close, but here meanwhile, we must pause, reserving the remainder of the colloquy for other discourses, while we linger a little to give prominence and point to one or two precious truths that have come out before us in our exposition.

Notice then in the first place, how the real humanity of our Lord Jesus incidentally reveals itself in this narrative. He

was weary with his journey, and just as an ordinary man would have done, he rested by the well. Now I am not sure but that in a fact like that, thus casually stated, his participation in our nature is evinced even more convincingly than in the records of his birth and death. We are, to a certain extent, so overawed by the glory with which these other events were accompanied, that we see in them proofs of his deity rather than his humanity. In the one case we feel like the shepherds who worshipped at his cradle, and in the other like the centurion who said, "Truly this was the Son of God." But when we see him in the wilderness hungry, or in the boat, on the Galilean lake, asleep, or as here footsore and fatigued, we are led to say, He is our human brother, partaker of our nature, in everything but sin, and so in all our

daily experiences we may be sure of his sympathy and support.

Now all this is most important, for perhaps we are too apt to ignore the real humanity of our Lord. We believe so in his deity, that we allow it to overshadow his humanity. But that is at once dishonoring to him and unjust to ourselves. He is our brother as well as our Lord, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh as well as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person; and this union of both natures in him gives new attractiveness to each. His deity makes his human experiences valuable to us, inasmuch as by his omnipotence he can meet the necessities in us with which his humanity enables him to sympathize; and his humanity makes his deity accessible to us, so that we feel that in going to him we are going

to a human brother. Let us therefore embrace and ever hold fast both of these truths, the rather because the belief of both is absolutely indispensable if we would get the full comfort of either. He is a high priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, as well as the eternal Son of God, who is able and ready to help us in our time of need.

Notice in the second place, that when Christ savingly deals with any soul he does so *alone*. He sent his disciples away, that he might meet this woman by herself. And on another occasion we read that when he healed one who was blind, he led him apart from the multitude. We will get little good from Jesus until we find ourselves alone with him. Hence it is that conversion is so frequently the result of affliction. For suffering, trial, sorrow,

isolates a man from his fellows, and puts him face to face with Christ. It sends him across the brook like Jacob, to meet the Jabbok angel all alone. And it is at such times that he shows us all that is in our own hearts, and unfolds to us all that is in his. My hearer, Have you ever been thus alone with Christ? Remember that we are saved in units not in multitudes, and that the whole matter is a personal thing between Jesus and each individual.

Notice thirdly, that in seeking to do good to others we must not undervalue an audience of one. The Lord was as ready to speak with Nicodemus or with this woman here, as he was to address great multitudes; and few things in the New Testament are more suggestive than the numerous instances recorded in it, of dealing with individuals.

Andrew talked to Peter; Philip bore the good news to Nathanael, and the results were far reaching, beyond any power of human computation. So if we want to do good to others, let us not be too ambitious. There is much in the excitement of addressing a multitude,—but after all, the greatest good is accomplished, when we deal with individuals; and we have need to suspect ourselves if we despise the opportunity of speaking even to a single soul.

But even in dealing with individuals, we need to be on our guard lest we do more harm than good. Behold how wisely, yet how naturally, the Lord approaches this woman. He did not begin abruptly about spiritual things, asking her directly, whether she had ever thought of her salvation,

and denouncing everlasting punishment on her unless she repented. Had he taken that course, it is questionable if she would ever have been attracted toward him. But he took his text from the well by which he sat; and so led her on by degrees until he had brought her face to face with her sins, and with her Saviour.

Now let us imitate this divine tact, as I may call it, and cultivate the method of indirectness, by which we may rise from the occupations in which men are engaged and in which they are interested, up to those of higher and eternal moment. It is told of Edward Irving that he went one day to visit an infidel shoemaker, in the parish of St. John's, Glasgow, who had often threatened what he should do, if a minister came to him. Without saying a word about

religion, Irving went up to the seat on which he sat, lifted a piece of patent leather which was lying near, and knowing all about it, for he was the son of a tanner, began to speak with him of its manufacture. The man was astonished and delighted, and said, "Od ye're a sensible fellow, where do you preach?" Irving gave him the information which he desired, and from that point on he had no more regular attendant on his ministry than that cobbler; and when his old comrades rallied him for going to church, he only replied, "He's a sensible man yon, he kens about leather."

So I have heard another tell, how being driven a few miles to a railroad station, by a school boy, he got into conversation with him about arithmetic; and learning that he was

just then doing sums in profit and loss, as many of our merchants have been in another sense during these past days, he said, "Can you do all the questions in that rule?" "I think I can, sir," was the answer. "Can you do this one, 'What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul'?" "No, sir, I cannot answer that"; and thereupon the talk was all of spiritual things which left a deep and lasting impression on the heart of the lad.

How much better that is, than to go up in the street, as I have heard of one doing, to a perfect stranger, and say, "Do you know, sir, that you are going to hell?" only to be met with the reply, "Young man, you mean well, and I am glad, that if you were going to say that to any one you should say it to me, for I

know and love the Lord Christ; but if I had not been a Christian, I might have knocked you down. That is not the way to commend the gospel to a man's heart." It needs wisdom to win souls, and most of all the wisdom which can glide into the heart, through this "method of indirectness," and by interest in what a man is doing at the time lead him to interest in things for which heretofore he has not cared. You who would work for Christ seek to follow this Christ-like method.

Finally we may learn from this subject the unsatisfying nature of all mere earthly enjoyments, as contrasted with the satisfaction which the soul has in Christ. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, it shall be in him a well of wa-

ter springing up into everlasting life." Stier has said, that "these words would form an admirable inscription for a drinking fountain." But there are other places where they would be even more appropriate. For honest water—while it does not meet the need of the soul—will do no one much harm. But the fountains—rather call them broken cisterns—to which men repair for happiness often do injury—as well as give no satisfaction. There, for example, are the drinking saloon, the house of sensual gratification, the haunt of pleasure, and the like. How hollow they all are—when one goes to them for satisfaction of soul! The same may be said even of other things, which are not in themselves associated with sin, when men look to them for permanent enjoyment. "Whosoever drinketh of this

water shall thirst again." And the reason is because the cause of the unhappiness is in the heart, and until that is rectified, the man will have no abiding joy of the right sort in any thing.

But it is rectification of heart that Christ bestows. He gives a new nature. He takes away the burden of guilt. He removes the pollution of depravity. He gives his own Spirit to dwell in the man. Thereby he opens a perennial fountain in his own heart and that gives him happiness in every thing. That may sound very professional as it comes from me, and you may say that it is all cant. But listen to Robert Burns—

"It's no in titles nor in rank,
It's no in wealth, like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;

It's no in makin' muckle mair,
It's no in books, it's no in lear,
 To mak us truly blest;
If happiness hae not her seat
 And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
 But never can be blest:
 Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
 Could mak us happy lang;
The heart's ay the part ay
 That makes us right or wrang."

Yes—"the heart's ay the part ay that makes us right or wrang." Therefore he who makes the heart happy goes to the root of the matter—and that is precisely what Christ does. The man who is born again does not thirst again in the sense of becoming again unhappy or desiring something else than Christ. He has found the secret of happiness, and having obtained that his only ambition is to have more of

it. All other things are "broken cisterns that can hold no water"—this is the fountain of living water, and the fountain is within himself. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto Christ, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto him, hear and your soul shall live, and he will make an everlasting covenant with you—even the sure mercies of David."

JESUS AT THE WELL.



II.

The Place, the Object and the Nature
of True Worship.

JOHN iv. 15-26.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

II.

THE PLACE, THE OBJECT AND THE NATURE OF TRUE WORSHIP.

JOHN iv. 15-26.

WHEN the Lord said unto the woman, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," it is manifest that she very imperfectly understood his words. But she was so impressed with his whole manner as to believe that he was sincere in offering to her some-

thing which should be in some way to her permanent advantage. Therefore she answered him after this fashion: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

Some indeed will have it that she was still dealing in badinage, and seeking to turn the whole matter into ridicule. But the contrast between the title of honor, "Sir," or "Lord," which she now gives him, and the words of reproach, "thou being a Jew," which she had formerly employed, as well as the whole impression produced upon us by her request and by the Saviour's manner of dealing with it, prevent us from adopting such an opinion. She imagined that he was speaking of literal water, and foreseeing that if his words were true regarding that, she might be saved by him from much personal discomfort and

much daily drudgery, she asked that he would make good his assurance to her.

Her mistake, therefore, was the very simple and natural one of taking his language too literally. Nevertheless her request was a prayer which he interpreted and answered after his own wise way, and so as to give her a better blessing than at the moment she had in view. She knew not what she asked; and in her ignorance used words which indicated that she had a most defective apprehension of the advantage which she was to derive from the answer to her request. But, in that particular, we may well ask, whether she was greatly different even from the best or most enlightened among ourselves. Is it not true of us also, that even in our simplest petitions we know not what we ask? One asks for a new heart, and forthwith

he is led through some dreadful ordeal which reveals him to himself, and brings him to his Saviour, and though at the beginning he had no idea that this was the answer to his prayer, he comes at length to see, that thus and no other-wise God was giving him his desire. Another prays for holiness, and before he is aware, some calamity befalls him—bereavement darkens his dwelling; or affliction lays him on a bed of weakness; or adversity turns all his business enterprises into failures; and he is at first bewildered by the experience, but when, as the result of all, “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” begins to make its appearance, he learns that God all through has been granting his request.

Now it was quite similar in the case before us. This woman, not knowing what she asked, said: “Give me this

water," and Christ answered, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." She winced at the words; and her eyes, we may imagine, fell beneath the searching gaze of him who uttered them. But she thought to parry the home thrust by saying, "I have no husband." That however did not serve her purpose, for the Lord replied—"Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." In the original there is a subtle meaning, which does not come out here in the translation. The Revisers give the last clause thus—"this hast thou said truly," but even that does not convey the full significance; for the adjective and not the adverb is employed, so that literally rendered the phrase is—"in that saidst thou a true thing."

The Saviour thereby makes her understand that while she told what was a literal fact, she was nevertheless not speaking to him with ingenuous frankness. For she had had five husbands to whom she had been legally wedded, and from whom she had been separated either by their death, or by her having been, for some reason or other, divorced from them; and she was now living in sin with one who had no title to be called her husband.

But what had all this to do with her request to get the "living water"? The question has puzzled many, and indeed most readers fail to see that the two are in any way connected. Some have so far misunderstood the drift and purpose of the Saviour as to suppose, that he was becoming alive to what they are pleased to insinuate was the impropriety

of the situation, and desired the presence of another at their conference. Others have imagined that the command, "Go, call thy husband," was a mere casual utterance, meant for nothing else than to fill up what otherwise might have been an awkward pause in the conversation.

In reality, however, the giving of that order by Jesus was the beginning of his answer to her request for the living water. She did not know it at the time, but as she went back over the interview in thought, she would see it all afterwards; and we are blind to Christ's method of dealing with those whom he seeks to save, if we do not see it while we read the history. They who seek him, do so usually because they feel their need of that which only he can give. But when he seeks a soul,

he begins by bringing that soul to a sense of its sinfulness, that it may be willing to accept of the salvation which he bestows. No one will accept of pardon and renewal until he knows himself to be a sinner; and no one will apply to Christ for these blessings until he is assured that he is a Saviour. Now you see here, how the Lord brought this woman's sin to her remembrance, so as to fill her with shame and sorrow, as preparatory to the revelation of himself to her as the promised deliverer from the guilt and power of iniquity. Nay by the very manner in which he wrought conviction of sin in her, he at the same time produced in her the impression that there was something extraordinary about himself.

The result of his words thus was at one and the same time to give her

a clearer knowledge of her own vileness, and a deeper sense of his greatness. And he does the same thing very frequently with sinners still. By showing them what is in their own hearts, he proves to them that he is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The light which he brings with him to a soul reveals, at once, its own condition, and his own greatness. In any case by the probing of this command, "Go, call thy husband," and the revelation to which it led, he so showed this woman to herself, as to make her feel her need, while at the same time he so unfolded his own greatness, as to dispose her to make enquiry concerning the most important of all subjects at his lips. For, startled by the perception of the fact that the secret chapters of her guilty life were known by him—a perfect

stranger seemingly to her—she said: “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

It has been thought that in speaking thus the woman tried to change the subject of conversation, and sought to ward off any farther reference to herself by engaging the Lord Jesus in religious controversy. Now there is no doubt that when we come into close quarters with sinners they frequently resort to just such tactics. How often, for example, does the unconverted man try to parry your appeal to him after this fashion: “What you say about me may be very true, but there are so many divisions among you, that you had better settle these, before you deal with me. There are Romanists and Protestants; Episcopali-

ans and Presbyterians; Congregationalists and Methodists; Baptists and Pædobaptists; and when you have agreed among yourselves which of you is the true church, then you may come to me." But that is a course of argument about as absurd as it would be for a man to say that there is no such thing as time, because one man's watch is not pointing to the same precise second as that of another; for high above all our differences there is the Lord Jesus Christ to whom we all alike acknowledge our allegiance, even as independent of all time-pieces there is the sun in the heavens to whose position relative to the earth, men desire everywhere to adjust their chronometers.

But though this use of controversy is very common, and though, at one time, I believed that the Samaritan

woman was guilty of so employing it, a closer study of the narrative has disposed me to take a different view. For I can scarcely conceive that to a mere quibbling subterfuge the Lord would have given the answer which he gave to this enquiry,—an answer which involved in it more of the deep things of his gospel, than he had yet declared even to his own disciples. Besides the woman's words are perfectly consistent with earnest anxiety to know the truth. The Saviour had touched her conscience in the quick. She had begun to feel her guilt, and that led her to think of God whom she as a Samaritan had been taught to believe could be worshipped acceptably only on Mount Gerizim, where the temple of her people had so long stood. But this man, whom she recognized as a prophet, because he

had shown such acquaintance with the facts of her history, was a Jew; who presumably believed, like other Jews, that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship.

Here, therefore, was a real dilemma. Whither was she, as a sinner, to go, in order to find acceptance with God? Was she to forswear the religion of her fathers and turn her back on Gerizim, while she went up to Jerusalem? or was she still to worship there where she was, and so go against the religion of him, who had so clearly shown himself to be the bearer of a divine commission? Whither, in her distress was she to go? what was she to do? He was a prophet, would he kindly enlighten her?

In reply the Lord said: "Woman, believe me, there cometh an hour,

when ye shall worship the Father, but neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But there cometh an hour, yea it is now come, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit," or rather perhaps God is Spirit, "and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth." Remarkable words—touching a height unattained by any heathen philosophy, and hardly more than approached even by the Prophets and Psalmists of the Old Testament. May God himself enable us to see their meaning, and to act upon the principles which they so strongly enunciate!

Notice first, however, the direct reply

which the Lord gives as to the relative position of Gerizim and Jerusalem. He does not shrink from expressing a definite opinion—which for all who believe in him is authoritative and final—on the matter which had been at issue for so many generations between the two nations. He tells the woman plainly that she and her people were wrong as to the nature of the object of worship; and as to the place of worship; and that on both of these points the truth lay with the Jews with whom he here for the moment identifies himself. “Ye worship ye know not what.” That is to say, you worship one with whose character as revealed by the prophets you are unacquainted. As Westcott has well paraphrased it, the meaning is—“You know whom to worship, but you do not know *Him*. By confining your faith to

the law you condemn yourselves to ignorance of the God of Israel. We Jews on the other hand worship that which we know, for the promised salvation is of the Jews. The power of Judaism lay in the fact that it was not simple deism, but the gradual preparation for the Incarnation. The Jew therefore knew that which he worshipped so far as the will and in that the nature of God was gradually unfolded before him."*

The promised Saviour of men was to come from among the Jews—and therefore their worship, as designed to be preparatory to his appearing, and as appointed by God himself, was alike in its nature, its object, and its locality, superior to that of the Samaritans.

But while that had been the case in the past, there was little profit in discussing

* "Speaker's Commentary," Vol. II., N. T. *in loco*.

the relative claims of the rival temples now, for the hour was coming, when men, Samaritans and Jews alike, should worship God as their Father, but should not care about the locality in which they worshipped him. The temple on Gerizim was already in ruins, and that in Jerusalem should be ere long razed to its foundations. Yet after both had disappeared men should continue to offer acceptable worship to God as the Father.

Then, leaving the mere local issue, he rises to the height of the great subject and lays down the principles by which all proper worship under the gospel dispensation is to be conducted. These may be grouped under the three headings of the object to be worshipped; the nature of the worship which alone he can accept; and the relation of locality to that worship; and it may be conducive both to

clearness of thought and readiness of recollection if we look at each of these in the order in which we have named them.

I. There is, first, the object to be worshipped—God—a Spirit—the Father. Now here we have a personality; an essence; and a relationship. There is, first, a personality. The Lord is evidently speaking of a living Being, having a distinct unity and personality. He would not have us confound God and nature, like the pantheist, with whom, as Liddon has epigrammatically expressed it, God is “nothing else than a fine name for the universe.” Neither would he countenance the error of the polytheist who worshipped gods many and lords many, and who supposed that each particular divinity had a department of his own, within which he was

supreme, but beyond which he had no influence or control. There is but one God—the living and the true, and of him the Saviour speaks in the words before us; a Being to whom we can say “Thou *God*,” and who has a distinct existence antecedent to and apart from the universe which he has made, according to the words of Moses, “*In the beginning, God.*”

But there is here, secondly, an essence. “God is spirit,” or “a spirit.” But what is a spirit? It is much easier to ask that question, than it is to find for it a satisfactory reply. I have seen it defined thus—“a living, thinking, but unseen being.” But even that does not give us much that is positive to lay hold of. The real truth is that we know exceedingly little about spirit. We know through consciousness the qualities of

our own souls, presuming these to be spiritual (which I hope I may do), and that is about all that we do know positively on the subject. But if we know little positively and cannot say much of what spirit is; we know something negatively and can say what it is not. It is not material. Therefore to represent God to ourselves either in thought or symbol, under any material form, is to be guilty of idolatry. We may think of him as the being in whom perfect intelligence, unsullied holiness, almighty power, unerring wisdom, and infinite love reside, but whenever we give to that being any material form, we do dishonor to his essence, and set up to ourselves another God than that whom the Scriptures and Christ reveal.

But, thirdly, here we have a relationship. Christ speaks of God as the Fa-

ther; yea he repeats the term again and again as if it were of pre-eminent importance. "Ye shall worship the Father," "the true worshippers shall worship the Father," "the Father seeketh such to worship him." God is the Father of men; and they only worship him acceptably who worship him as such, in spirit and in truth. He is their Father, not simply because he has created them; but because they were created in his image and regarded by him with tenderness and affection. And though they have lost that image largely by sin, they are still his lost children, whom he has sought to regain by sending his first-born Son into the world to take their nature and their sins upon him, that through faith in him they may be born again, renewed into his image, and reinstated in his family.

So long, therefore, as men stand away in dread and terror from God, regarding him only as their king, lawgiver, and judge, appalled by his greatness, blinded by his glory, overawed by his omnipotence, he is not worshipped by them as he seeks to be worshipped. He longs for their recognition of him as their Father. He desires to be regarded by them with affection; to be approached by them with confidence; to be treated by them with that union of love, liberty, reverence, and delight, with which a child on earth treats a father who is worthy of the name.

Mark that expressive phrase—"the Father seeketh such to worship him." The longing of his heart is for such appreciation by men; and that longing was so ardent, as to lead him to give his Eternal Son that he might make atonement for

their sins, put the spirit of adoption into their hearts, and, taking them by the hand, lead them into the very holy of holies of his presence, and teach them to say before the mercy-seat, "Our Father which art in heaven." As Westcott says, "This revelation of God as Father sums up the new tidings of the Gospel."* Till Christ came it was very imperfectly apprehended, if apprehended at all, and ever since the advent the words of the Redeemer are strictly true: "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." One may attain to a knowledge of the existence of God apart from Christ; but only the eternal Son of God can reveal to us his Fatherhood, and so only when we accept the revelation which Christ has made of God can we worship God as he seeks to be worshipped.

"Speaker's Commentary," *in loco*.

II. But this brings me to look at the second group of principles which these words contain, those namely which relate to the nature of acceptable worship under the gospel dispensation. "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth;" and, "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." That is to say, the right worship of God is that which is "in spirit and in truth." But what precisely does it mean to worship God "in spirit and in truth?" We shall get at the ideas implied if we bear in mind that worship involves an expression of feeling; and a conception of the object towards whom the feeling is entertained.*

* For many of the thoughts in this paragraph I am indebted to Westcott's admirable exposition of the passage in the "Speaker's Commentary."

Now the expression of feeling is to be "in spirit," and the conception of the object is to be "in truth." The spirit—taking Paul's tripartite division of our human nature into soul, body, and spirit—is that part of our nature which holds or is capable of holding intercourse with God. The sphere of worship therefore was now to be in that highest region where the divine and human meet, and not, as in an earlier period of discipline, in the material or fleshly. Judaism was very largely a worship in the letter. The "law stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation." But now through the Incarnation men are enabled to have immediate communion with God and thus a worship "in spirit" has become possible; or

as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has said—"the way into the Holiest of all has now been made manifest," so that "we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus."

Then the second thing involved in worship is a conception of the object toward whom the feeling expressed in spirit is entertained, and that conception is to be "in truth." Now what that implies will appear if we contrast the gospel worship not now with the Jewish, but with the Samaritan. For Samaritanism was worship in falsehood, not in truth. The Samaritans had a wrong idea of God. They did not receive and did not believe the prophetic revelations regarding him, and so they did not worship him "in truth." As Westcott has said—"Worship is essen-

tially limited by the idea of the being worshipped. A true idea of God is essential to a right service of him." And to get that true idea of God, we must accept the revelation made of him by the Incarnate Son.

These then are the essential conditions of acceptable worship—that it be not of the letter or of the flesh but in spirit, and that we have a true idea of Him to whom it is offered. Now if this be so, it may appear to some that the natural inference from these principles is that worship need have no external form whatever; and I am free to say, that if we were simply and only spirits that would be all that would be required. But in our complex humanity, the feeling of the spirit must make for itself expression in some outward form. Just as the soul has its

outward organ in the body; so, as we are presently constituted, the soul of worship, which is spirit, must have some external body—which is form or ritual. But then just as the body without the spirit is dead, so the form or ritual of worship without the spirit is dead also. The real worship is the exercise of the spirit; and the form or ritual is acceptable only when it is the natural and genuine expression of the spirit. It is not first the form or ritual, and then the spirit; but it is first the spirit, and then the form or ritual as the expression of the spirit.

It is thus with worship, precisely as it is with giving, of which the Apostle says, "If there be *first* a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." The largest offering made for any cause

is accepted according to the measure of the love to God of which it is the expression; and so again is the smallest. Hence the widow's mite and Mary's alabaster box of ointment were valuable in the Redeemer's eyes far beyond the earthly estimate of their worth, because of the fulness of love that was in them.

Now in the same way the grandest ceremonial of worship, whether in cathedral or oratory, is accepted by God only according to the spirit of which it is the expression. I cannot presume to say how much of such services is offered "in spirit." God knoweth--but only for the spirit that is in them does he accept them. While again the baldest ritual, and the tamest ceremonial will be estimated by him, not according to its outward appearance, but according to the spirit which seeks in it to find

expression. I do not put the one above the other as an external service, for if they be simply external services there is nothing of worship in either of them. It is as possible to be hypocritical in the use of the simplest ritual, as it is to be so in the employment of the most elaborate; and so long as the outward continues to be for us the necessary expression of the inward, there will always be a danger of our attending more to the outward than to the inward, to the form than to the spirit. But knowing that danger we ought to be on our guard against it; and we should look first and chiefly to the spirit, in the conviction that if that be in earnest, it will either find or make for itself an appropriate expression in some outward form.

Here then in brief are the truths

about the nature of worship set before us in the words of our Lord: God is spirit, therefore our worship of him must be in spirit, for only a spiritual offering can reach a spiritual nature. Nay more, we, though complex in our humanity, are in our highest nature spirits. That which each of us calls "I," "me," "myself," is spirit. The body is mine; the soul is mine; but the spirit is the self to which both the others belong; therefore my worship must be first of the spirit—else it is not the exercise of that which is emphatically and peculiarly myself. Further this worship must be in truth, that is to say, it must be addressed to and moulded by God as he has revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ his Son.

III. But we come now to the third

thing referred to in these suggestive words, namely, the relation of locality to acceptable worship under the gospel dispensation. It is indicated in this saying of the Lord, that in the matter of the worship of God the place is of no importance whatever. If the service be in spirit and in truth, it may be offered at any time and in any locality. No doubt there may be associations connected with certain localities which are not linked to others; and it is a matter of convenience that a company of worshippers should have a house in which they can statedly assemble for the service of God. But now under the gospel, there are no holy places properly so called. Of old, Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. There was the chosen temple of God, in which the visible

emblem of his glory ever dwelt above the mercy-seat, and in whose outer court the smoke of sacrifice daily ascended. But though many good ends were subserved by this localization of worship, it was a mere temporary and educational arrangement, and when Jesus Christ came, the hour struck when men might worship God anywhere, provided only they worshipped him in spirit and in truth. The meeting-place in which the first effusion of the Holy Ghost was enjoyed on the day of Pentecost was not the Temple, but an upper-room; and when the wonders of that day were renewed at Cesaræa to the Gentiles, those who received the baptism of fire were not assembled in any so-called consecrated building, but in the house of Cornelius the Centurion. So again, Paul gathered

his congregation in Ephesus in the schoolroom where at other hours of the day Tyrannus taught rhetoric or philosophy; and in Rome he received his fellow worshippers in "his own hired house." Similarly we find that there were churches or assemblies, in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, and in that of Philemon; and generally, all through the New Testament, it is clear that no essential importance was attached to the place where believers met for worship but that it was selected purely for the sake of convenience or of safety.

Nor was it otherwise in the first ages of the church. During a time of persecution, and many centuries before the foundation stone of St. Peter's Cathedral was laid, or its gorgeous ritual thought of, the Christians of

Rome met in the catacombs beneath the city and found at once a house of prayer and a place of refuge beside the graves of their brethren. And similar latitude as to the locality of worship has prevailed in later days. The Scottish Covenanters gathered many a time in lonely valleys, or on bleak and heathery moors, and the Puritans of London hid themselves in obscure buildings in the secret places of their city; but who will say that their devotion was on that account any the less acceptable to God? During the thrilling time of the Indian mutiny Havelock and his saints, as his soldiers were reproachfully nicknamed, held a religious service in a heathen temple, surrounded with all the disgusting paraphernalia of idolatry, but who dares affirm that their approach to God was

any the less real, or any the less pleasing to their Lord, because of the unwonted place in which they called upon his name? And when the persecuted ones in Madagascar met in the woods and sang their hymns in whispers, lest they should betray their hiding-place, will any one presume to allege that their worship was at all vitiated because it was not offered in a splendid cathedral, with all the pomp of an imposing ceremony?

In the village of Olney in England there is a building called "the Great House," in which John Newton, when vicar of the parish, rented a room, for the purpose of holding weekly meetings for prayer and the exposition of the Scriptures. It was a Union meeting though instituted more than a century ago. There frequently was William Bull, the

faithful pastor of the Congregational church in Newport-Pagnell in the neighborhood. There too very regularly was the gentle, tender, shrinking poet, William Cowper, with others of kindred love to Christ. The fellowship was of the highest and holiest, and it was for the opening service in that room that Cowper wrote the beautiful hymn beginning with these lines:

“Jesus, where’er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat;
Where’er they seek thee, thou art found,
And every place is holy ground.”

For the same occasion Newton wrote the hymn of which the first verse is as follows:

“O Lord, our languid souls inspire,
For here we trust thou art;
Send down a coal of heavenly fire
To warm each waiting heart”—

and we may believe that the devotion which so expressed itself was not the less pleasing unto God for being offered in such a place. We are as near to the mercy-seat now in one place as in another; and provided we worship God in spirit and in truth, it makes no matter where we are when we offer him our homage.

But what of the woman now? How did she receive these profound sayings? She seems to have been completely bewildered by them. They were far above her comprehension, and so, very naturally, she took refuge in the thought that one was coming who would make all such things plain. Therefore she said, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come he will tell us all things." As a Samaritan and receiving the Pentateuch she was of course

familiar with the prediction of Moses—
“A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me: him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.” And the words of Jesus quickened in her the desire for the appearance of this long-expected teacher. As a German commentator has it—“The woman is apprehended by the answer of Jesus, but does not yet apprehend it, and appeals to the Messiah.”

Just as before he unfolded to her the sinfulness of her life, that she might desire deliverance; so now he shows to her the ignorance of her mind, that she might ask instruction; and when she is led to connect the coming of the Messiah with the satisfaction of her soul, in forgiveness and in knowledge, she has reached that stage, when

revelation will be prized. She is now in a condition to understand and appreciate the news, and he says, "I that speak unto thee, am he."

And who may describe the emotions of her heart as she heard the announcement? The painter who shrank from attempting to portray the expression of a face at a moment of intense excitement, dropped a veil over it—that each spectator might imagine for himself what that veil covered. And the sacred penman here is silent on the appearance of this woman in the ecstatic moment of her discovery of the Messiah—that each reader may seek to realize it for himself. It is a proof of the genuine inspiration of the evangelist, and where he says nothing we need not attempt to enlarge. Fitly, therefore, may we pause here, and leave the remainder

of the narrative for future consideration, while we linger over one or two thoughts suggested by the ground over which we have come.

We may learn then, in the first place, how unimportant all controversies about the forms of worship are. The great thing is that we have correct ideas as to the object whom we worship, and that we worship him in spirit. But when we exalt the form into essential moment, we make a God of that; and all true worship disappears. Hence undue attention to form is dangerous as well as unnecessary. It tends to separate the spirit from the form, and to make ritual all in all. It makes a superstition out of that which ought to be a worship; and by its stickling for minute details it develops an idolatry in its very zeal for purity.

Nor is this danger confined to those who seek to have an elaborate ceremonial. An idol is not less an idol when it is made of lead than when it is made of gold; and we may make an idol out of the very plainness of Puritanic worship as really as others do out of the grandeur of a pompous ritual, with all its accessories of statues and paintings, and incense and music. That is the best form which is the simplest and clearest expression of the spirit; even as in writing that is the best style which gives the most direct and intelligible representation of the thought of the writer. Hence supreme attention ought to be directed to the spirit in worship, and when that is right, the form may be left under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and within the lines of Scripture to take care of itself.

But mere attention to the spirit will not suffice, and so finally, we may learn from this subject that in worship it is not enough that the emotion be sincere. We must worship God in truth, as well as in spirit. It is not sufficient that the soul be engaged. Many say indeed that it makes no matter what a man believes if he be only sincere. But that is one of those half-truths that are as dangerous as whole errors. Sincerity is good; but sincerity in that which is untrue will work more mischief than positive insincerity. Let a man, for example, sincerely believe that water will support him, and forthwith trying to walk upon it he will be drowned. In the same way let a man believe that he can be saved otherwise than through Christ, and trusting to that other Saviour he will be lost eternally.

Now the same thing holds in worship. The superstitious devotee is sincere, but is he therefore worshipping God in truth? Let but the idea gain currency among us that nothing more than sincerity is needed in worship, and every missionary agency in existence will be paralyzed into inactivity. But with the Saviour's words to the woman in our minds we cannot make such a mistake. For we are to worship God "in truth," that is, as he has revealed himself to men in and through Christ, who has said: "I am the way, the truth and the life." So they only approach God in truth, who come to him in Christ. Unless we do that, whatever else we worship, we do not worship *God*, and he cannot accept our service as offered to himself.

That is the truth which the Lord emphasized to the Jews in these words: "The

Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him." This is the reason why we insist so strongly on approaching God through Christ; and why Socinianism that undeifies Christ, does at the same time dishonor God. It thinks, indeed, that it is exalting God, by speaking of Christ as a mere creature. But in the light of that statement, and of the Saviour's words at the well, it is not worshipping God at all—for he that honoreth not the Son—even as he honors the Father—does not even honor the Father. It may worship "in spirit," but it does not worship "in truth," and it is a real idolatry, and they who worship Christ, and God in Christ, are

the true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Hence in its recoil from that which it deems idolatry in the worship of Christ that system does not even worship the Father truly, and does him positive dishonor. This may seem an hard saying to many; but the saying is Christian; and it may well put you on your guard against all such as seek to make of him only a teacher or a prophet or a martyr and not the manifestation of the Father to us, according as he said to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The true worship, therefore, is the sincere homage of the soul, offered to God through Christ, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our God and Father in Him.

JESUS AT THE WELL.



III.

The Sower and the Reaper.

JOHN iv. 27-42.

And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat?

Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

And many more believed because of his own word;

And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

III.

THE SOWER AND THE REAPER.

JOHN iv. 27-42.

SCARCELY had Jesus revealed his Messiahship to the woman, when his disciples, having finished their errand in the city, made their appearance at the well. They were surprised to find him talking with a woman, not because she was a Samaritan, but simply because she was a woman; for even among the Jews, it was said by their learned doctors that "a man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife," and that it was "better that the words of the law should be burned than delivered to women." So

that here the Lord not only defied national antipathies, but also set at nought all prejudice of sex, and showed that he came into the world, among other things, for the elevation of woman to her true position as the companion and help-meet of her husband.

But though the disciples were surprised at coming upon their Master while he was thus engaged, such was their reverence for him, and such their absolute confidence in the rectitude of his character, that no one of them ventured to say to her, "What seekest thou?" or to him, "Why talkest thou with her?" Nor indeed did she feel inclined to tarry to be questioned by them. Her soul was full of the discovery which she had made, and she was eager to make others sharers in her joy. Therefore,—leaving her pitcher by the well,—for thus early had

she found the infinite superiority of the living water to that which could be drawn from any earthly fountain, she went her way into the city, not to bring her husband, but to say to all the men she met, "Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did, can this be the Christ?"

Notice, as we pass along, the testimony which she bears to Jesus, "He told me all things that ever I did." This has been regarded by most of the commentators as the unconscious exaggeration of an excited woman. But I incline to the belief, that she was speaking simply the truth according to her experience. The Lord *had* set her entire life before her in a new light. His word had been "a discerner of the thoughts and intents" of her heart. It had looked her through and through. It had "searched her and known her thoughts, it had tried her

and known her ways," and therefore she had been brought to belief in his declaration when he said: "I that speak unto thee, am the Messiah." The emphasis of her thought, therefore, is not on the magnitude of the revelation of her actions which he had made to her, but on the quality of it—for she had never seen herself as God saw her, until he had spoken to her.

But that is precisely what the Bible does to every reader who is awakened by its statements. That is precisely what the truth from the living lips of the preacher does for those who are apprehended by its force. It shows them to themselves. It holds the mirror up before them so exactly that they say within themselves, "somebody must have told him all about us; he could not have described us better,

if he had been perfectly familiar with the most secret things of our histories," and in that state of heart they are the better prepared to receive the good news of salvation through Jesus, from his mouth. I do not regard the statement of the woman here therefore as exaggerated; for the words of the Lord to her had made her feel that an all-seeing eye was gazing into her; and just as, when a man is drowning, his whole lifetime seems to pass in review before him almost in a moment; so this experience brought up all her conduct to her memory, and set it fully in her view in the white light of the thrice Holy Jehovah.

But mark, again, the wisdom of her question, "Can this be the Christ?" There is a delicate meaning in the original here, which can hardly be reproduced in any translation. The interrogative

particle which is used is that which stimulates to enquiry, but rather seems to expect a negative answer, and its force is something like this: "It is not possible, surely, that this is the Christ?" or, "This surely cannot be the Christ?" or, as it is in the Revised Version, "Can this be the Christ?" She for her part is absolutely sure that he is the Messiah; but she will not overstate the case, neither will she claim credit on the ground of her possession of a character which notoriously did not belong to her. But putting her own history in the foreground, and giving as the evidence of that which she suggested, the fact of the stranger's acquaintance with it, she rather insinuates than alleges that after all he *may* be the Christ, and invites them to come with her and see for themselves.

Thus she takes her place alongside

of Philip who, when Nathanael asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" replied, "Come and see"; nay beside the Lord himself, who when John and Andrew said: "Rabbi, where dwellest thou," made answer, "Come and see." The gospel has nothing to conceal. It courts investigation. It submits itself to the test of experiment. It fears nothing from the most searching scrutiny. Whether inquiry be made as to the genuineness and authenticity of its documents; or the character of its Lord; or the validity of his claims, to be received as the God-man; or the efficacy of his death as an atonement for sin; or the reality of his resurrection from the grave and his ascension into glory; or the influence of his cross on the individual man, or on nations at large—its reply always is, "*Come and*

see," and they who accept that invitation in a spirit of candor, are soon convinced, as these Samaritans were, that he is "the Saviour of the world."

It was a strange thing to see a woman, and such a woman, so interested in, and roused to enthusiasm concerning one who, according to her own showing, had let her see how wicked she had been—and we do not wonder that the curiosity of her townsmen was awakened, so that they flocked out in numbers to behold the stranger of whom she spoke.

But while she had been on her mission of gladness, and those to whom she addressed herself were hastening from Sychar to the well, an interesting and suggestive course of thought had been conversationally put before the minds of the disciples by their Master. Remembering how exhausted he had been when

they left him, they eagerly presented food to him on their return, saying: "*Master, eat.*" But in the joy which he had experienced in leading the woman up to the saving knowledge of himself, he had forgotten his hunger and fatigue. Indeed, for the time being, such is the power of the soul over the body, they had both disappeared. He had already had repast. The joy of his labor had been to him as food, and he replied: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of."

On a lower level, all of us know something of the experience thus delineated. Even those who are not animated by the loftiest motives of the gospel, but filled only with the joys of earth, have often been so gladdened with the receipt of some joyful news, or so engrossed in some delightful study, or so excited by some magnificent discovery that weariness and hunger have

been for the time forgotten. And they who have tasted the joy of which the Saviour was here speaking, and have been instrumental in the saving of a soul, can testify that in the absorption of themselves in that unwonted gladness, they have had such elevation of spirit that they have not been conscious either of the body or its wants.

But the disciples were puzzled by their Master's words. They were as much at a loss to understand him when he spoke of food of which they knew not, as the woman had been when he referred to "living water." Therefore in utter bewilderment they said one to another, "Hath any man brought him aught to eat?" or—for we have here the same interrogative particle as in the twenty-ninth verse—"Can it be possible that any man has brought him something to

eat?" But he put an end to their perplexity by explaining his meaning thus: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work, and I have had a rich repast on that since you left. My very occupation is my food. Man lives not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and my food as the Saviour of men is to carry out my Father's will in every particular, and to finish the work which he has given me to do."

Marvellous words, especially when we remember that it was when he hung upon the cross, and bowed his head in death, that he said of that great work of his—"It is finished." Thus the labor whose completion involved the very death of the body was the support of his soul. In the consciousness of the divine approval; in the enjoyment of

the divine fellowship; and in the assurance that ere long he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, he was upborne, through fatigue, and hunger, and persecution, yea through death itself. The joy that was thus set before him was his hidden food; and even at that time, in the conversion of that woman, and the results which immediately followed it, he had such a foretaste of that final felicity—such a taste of that heavenly meat,—that he was no longer exhausted or an hungered.

Such as it seems to me is the shade of thought which connects the saying of the Lord, about his food, with the remarkable words which follow, and which have so exercised the ingenuity of interpreters. The meaning of the verses (35-38) may perhaps be most simply given in the form of a paraphrase

like this: "When the husbandman has sown his seed he is in the habit of saying, 'Now, after four months we shall have a harvest,' and these words have come to be proverbial in the land, so that when one is impatient of results he is reminded that four months must intervene between the sowing and the reaping. But such long delay is not essential in spiritual things. As you know I am the sower; it is mine pre-eminently to drop the good seed of the word. That is the work which has been given me to do, and the doing of which is my food. In that work I have been engaged while you were absent, and lo! yonder, in the people of the city coming forth to meet me, there is a field whitening already to the harvest. In this case, therefore, I shall have both the joy of the sower and the gladness of the reaper. But it

will not always happen that the sower and the reaper shall be identical. In the coming time in my church, I shall be recognized as the sower; and all others will be reapers whose peculiar joy will be that of gathering in the fruit of my labor. The reapers, as every one can see, will have a great reward—which shall continue forever, seeing that the sheaves are composed of immortal souls; but the reward shall not be the reapers' alone. It shall be divided with them by me, the sower, since both have had to do with the securing of the harvest. And thus, though here also the proverb will hold good, 'One soweth and another reapeth,' it will not be verified in the same disappointing fashion that it is so frequently on earth. Usually it means that the rewards of labor do not go to him who has deserved them, but

are snatched away by some one else. In the spiritual harvest, however, that will not be the case, but all who have had anything whatever to do with the growth or production of the crop shall receive their due proportion of reward, so that they shall all rejoice together. In the nature of the case, you could not do my work. I have come to be *the Sower*, and to *be the seed*; for as *the word* I am both, and as the seed, I must die; therefore in sending you forth as apostles, I have given you a commission to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor. I have done the work heretofore, and will continue to do it until I finish it by my death; then ye shall enter upon my labors; but I shall have the reward equally with you—for I shall see of the fruit of my sacrifice, and in the end sower and reapers shall rejoice together."

Such, after much study of these verses, I take to be their meaning. Their primary reference is to the circumstances by which they were suggested, and therefore their first application ought to be to the difference between the work of the Lord as that of the Sower; and the labor of the apostles as that of reapers; and to the fact that together they shall eternally rejoice in the results springing from their combined toil. "He that soweth," and "other men labored," are phrases which in the first instance and in a peculiar sense, describe the Lord Jesus himself; while the clause "ye are entered into their labors," clearly refers to the first apostles. Pre-eminently the Sower is the Son of man, and even the twelve whom he ordained were only reapers.

But relatively and subordinately it is also true, that, in the service of Christ,

there are those whose special gift is that of sowing; and those whose peculiar labor is that of reaping; while there are others, who, like the Saviour himself in the instance before us,—which suggested the comparison—are both sowers and reapers, and have the gladness of both. When one sees the results of his labors he is both sower and reaper; but when one works earnestly in the proclamation of the truth and sees no result, while another coming after him almost immediately reaps the harvest of his toil, the proverbial saying is fulfilled, “One soweth and another reapeth.” Yet the sower is not deprived of his reward, for, as one has admirably said here, “The blessed issue of the whole ingathering is no more the fruit of the last operation than of the first,” and therefore “the joy of the great harvest-home will

be the common joy of all who have taken any part in the work, from the first operation to the last."*

While this conversation—of which we may believe that only the highly condensed summary is here preserved—was going on between the Lord and his followers, the woman had been proclaiming her discovery to the men of her city, and that to such good purpose, that two kinds of results were produced; first, a certain number of the Sycharites believed in Jesus as the Messiah, simply on her testimony; and besought him to remain with them for a season, so that he abode there two days; and second, many more, after coming into contact with himself, and hearing his discourses, for it does not appear that he wrought any

* Dr. David Brown, "Commentary," *in loco*.

miracle among them, believed because of his own word, and said unto the woman: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." The words "the Christ" are omitted in the Revised version, and rightly so in accordance with the preponderating weight of manuscript authority. And the force of the expression is strengthened thereby, for it brings into strong relief the universality of the reference of the work of the Lord as the Saviour of the world, and shows that the Samaritans were ready to receive *at once* that truth which had been proclaimed at first to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, but which had now become so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. The fact is one

both for wonder and for warning. The salvation which sprung from the Jews, was first regarded by these Samaritans as for the world; and the Jews refusing so to regard it, forfeited its enjoyment, and were deprived of its blessings.

This is a history possessed of thrilling interest, and almost every incident in it might be turned by us to profitable, practical account; but out of a multitude of lessons that suggest themselves to me, I select only the following.

In the first place, let the zeal of this woman to tell others of the discovery she had made, stir us up to earnest effort for the diffusion of the gospel of Christ. Some will have it that she left her pitcher behind her as a pledge of her return; but I do not believe that she thought of her pitcher at all. She was so absorbed in what she had

heard, that she could not but tell it to her townsmen. She felt that her joy was incomplete until she had shared it with others. And it is similar with all who have found salvation in Jesus Christ. Even a heathen could say, "If knowledge were to be offered to me with this restriction, that I should keep it to myself, and not share it with others, I would reject it." There is thus in each soul an instinctive impulse, prompting it to publish that which has filled itself with joy, so that the command of the Lord runs parallel to, nay coincides with and strengthens our natural inclination when he says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"; and, "Let him that heareth say, Come."

Every believer is to become in his own sphere a missionary of the cross; and if

there be no enthusiasm in our hearts about the proclamation of the gospel or the conversion of sinners, we make it only too evident that we have not yet discovered what there is in it for ourselves. But if our spirits are stirred within us at the sight of the idolatry of our fellowmen; if our hearts prompt us so that—like Paul at Athens—we cannot keep from telling them of “Jesus and the resurrection,” we make it manifest that we are the disciples of him who said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work,” and who commissioned his followers thus, “As my father hath sent me into the world, so have I sent you into the world,” “As ye go, preach.”

But some may ask, “How are we to preach?” And I answer, just as this woman did here. When we speak of preach-

ing now, indeed, it is too often taken for granted, that we refer to the public proclamation of the gospel from a pulpit to a large audience. But that is a modern narrowing of the significance of the word. No doubt there is a noble sphere in the pulpit, and I would be the very last to depreciate it in any way—nay rather, “I magnify mine office,” and believe it to be the highest which this earth offers to sanctified ambition. But New Testament preaching is not necessarily speaking to a multitude. It is the setting of the gospel before the mind of another—no matter where or how we find him. Philip “preached” Jesus to the Ethiopian treasurer as he rode with him in his chariot; and you may do the same, in a conversation which multitudes would term “casual,” with a fellow passenger in the railroad

car or on the deck of the steamship, or with some one who is brought into contact with you, in your summer retreat.

If all who are enrolled as members of our Christian churches, were only to recognize such opportunities and take advantage of them wisely for the diffusion of the gospel, how soon might the world be converted unto God? Do not lose the little sphere, by waiting for a greater; but begin where you are, asking the while that God would give to you the "word in season." In your holiday time many of you will be away from the city, in places where you may be thrown among strangers, some of whom are ignorant of Christ and his salvation. Why should you not seek somehow to benefit them? Only be wise about it, and take care that your conduct shall illustrate and not neutralize your words—then you too

may share that joy of the reaper—whereof the Master speaks so graphically here.

And to encourage you in this determination, see, here, in the second place, how much one earnest laborer can accomplish in the service of God. A whole city was awakened and blessed, through the eager, loving zeal of this woman. Often when we endeavor to enlist some new recruit for active work in the cause of the Lord Jesus, we are met with the response—"I have no influence, I can do nothing; go for some one else." Now it would be easy to expose the hollowness of this pretended humility; for if we should take these people at their word, and reply, "Yes, it is too true, you have no influence and you can do nothing; and I made a mistake in coming to you"—they would be excessively indignant. But

to-night I meet it in another way. Look at this woman. Might not she have said, "I am only a woman, who will listen to me?" Or might she not have felt that the character of her past life had been such as ought to prevent her taking any prominent position? But instead of that she consulted not "with flesh and blood;" but let the promptings of her heart decide for her what was her duty in the case, and went forward to tell her townsmen about the man whom she believed to be the Christ.

And mark how successful she was. The men of her city went out in large numbers to hear for themselves, multitudes believed on her simple word; and the city as a whole was blessed. Let no one say, therefore, that he can do nothing. What is lacking is not influence, or a sphere in which to exert

it, but simply the will to put forth your influence where you are to the uttermost for Christ and his cause. And surely in the constraining power of the love of Christ on the one hand, and in the urgent need of our suffering and perishing fellowmen upon the other, we have motives powerful enough to animate us to self-sacrifice and perseverance in this noble work. Rouse you then to earnestness in this good and gracious enterprise. Be earnest, be zealous, be faithful, in seeking thus to "serve your generation by the will of God." Resolve to make the world the better for your being in it. Remember that

"'Twere infamy to die and not be missed";

while the heaven of one whom we have been the means of leading thither will double our own.

But let us learn, in the third place, that in the service of God there are different departments, but there is a common joy to all the servants. "One soweth and another reapeth"; but "he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." No one man's labors now in any province are entirely independent of those of the men who have gone before him. Always we build in one form or another on a foundation which others have laid. Invariably we enter a field, which has been already sown by another; and therefore we cannot have all the reward or honor to ourselves.

You see that illustrated in science. Franklin laid the foundation on which Morse reared the telegraph; and Morse prepared the way for Bell and Edison with the telephone. Watt made it possible for George Stephenson to

become the constructor of the locomotive; and in general we see, that the discoveries of one age, furnish the means for making the inventions of the next.

But it is quite similar in the history of the church. There were Reformers before the Reformation; and their work, though apparently unsuccessful, made the Reformation possible, when its time had come. If there had been no Wicliffe, there would have been no Huss or Jerome, and if there had been no Huss, there might have been no Luther. Hence the grandeur of this age, is due not merely to the men who live in it, but to the accumulated legacy of blessing bequeathed to us by those who have gone before us. We boast indeed of the enlightenment of this nineteenth century, but small thanks to us for that—we did not make it; we have

inherited it for the most part, and it ought to be therefore to us far more a source of responsibility, than an occasion for pride; for we ought to see to it that we pass along that heritage to those who shall come after us not only unabridged by any unfaithfulness of ours, but rather increased by a new deposit of our own creation.

The same thing holds good in working for God in any one locality. The success of a man in the ministry is never entirely owing to his own work, and that which seems to be a failure in one, may only be the sowing of the seeds of what appears as a rapid and extraordinary ingathering in the history of him who follows. We often make very harsh and unjust judgments, because we forget that truth. Thus a faithful pastor labors for years in the earnest preaching of the gospel

and sees little or no fruit; so that he is greatly depressed and passes away saying, "Lord, who hath believed our report." But his place is soon filled by another who has not long begun his labor before conversions come to gladden his heart. They multiply until men say, that he is having a revival, and forthwith the remark becomes current that "this might have come years ago, if their old pastor had only been like their new minister." But the real truth may be, that the successor is only reaping the harvest that has sprung from the sowing of his predecessor and that there would have been no such ingathering, if there had been no such previous labors.

Thus the remembrance of the truth on which I am now insisting serves to check undue elation over success on the one hand, and to preserve from undue depres-

sion from apparent failure on the other; while the statement of the fact that sower and reaper shall rejoice together is full of stimulus to us all. We are all alike servants of the one Master. Some he sets to sow, and others to reap; but he rewards them all, not for sowing as such, nor for reaping as such, but for loving service to himself; and whether we are gladdened with the evidences of our success or not, we shall have in heaven the same joy as those who have been so blessed here, provided always we have been faithful to our trust. The missionary traveller, whose adventurous and courageous explorations have opened up new territories to the enterprise of the churches—dies on his knees in a grass hut, without seeing any converts in the heart of the dark continent; but he has an interest in the Christian work

prosecuted in all succeeding generations there, and will have a share in the eternal joy of these workers over their success. "William Tyndale," as I have elsewhere said, "was the pioneer who prepared the way for the making of our present version of the Holy Scriptures—yea in the antique individuality of its style that translation is more his than that of any other single individual. So he has—shall I say?—a royalty of reward accruing to him for all the triumphs which the English Bible has won. When he died at the stake at Vilvorde, it might have seemed that he had been entirely unrequited; and the late honors which have been heaped upon his name, do not pass within the veil. But whither earthly trophies and memorials cannot enter, redeemed souls are continually going, and of these, all who have used the Eng-

lish Bible here below shall add new happiness to the great reformer's heaven."*

But the same will be true of every faithful one who works for God upon the earth, even though, at the time, he may see little fruit. "There are four months to the harvest," and these months may be longer in the calendar of grace than in that of nature. But a harvest there will be, even if it should be reaped by others. Therefore let us labor on at our sowing, even though we should be in tears, for we shall reap in joy; if not here, yet assuredly hereafter in that blessed land of which it is said,

"The Harvest-home they keep,
And the summer of life they share,
And they that sowed and they that reaped
Rejoice together there."

* See, "Limitations of Life, and other Sermons," p. 387.

And now I conclude. This history is all true. It has been repeated over and over again in the experience of multitudes; and there are many now, I doubt not, who could endorse it from their own case. Jesus can give "living water." He is the source of true and abiding happiness. He satisfies the heart as bestowing pardon for its sin; purity for its pollution; light for its darkness; joy for its sorrow; life for its death. Some of us have met him, at earthly wells, where we were seeking that which no fountain of mere worldly pleasure could bestow. He has shown us there all things that ever we did, in such a way that we were utterly disgusted with them and heartily repented of them; and he has revealed himself to us so lovingly, that we were led at once to believe in him. Thereby we have obtained a joy the

like of which we never before experienced. We know that he can give peace and happiness, for he has given them to us. And to you who are seeking these things, we say, Come and see if this be not the Saviour you need. What he has done for us he will do for you. Come, come at once, come and try the experiment of his saving power, and then sure I am, after a time you will return to me and say: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world, for he who has saved us can save any man;" and when you say that to me, you will add the joy of the reaper to the happiness which I have so often had in the work of the sower.

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